

# The Sustainable Dead: Seeds of cultural syncretism in body disposal

Death and Culture III

September 2020

York St John University



# Adoption paths

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## Infrastructure



## Sustained innovation



## Social support

The demonstration effect where people see others in their social networks using something new, which in turn helps people understand the value of trying something new

## Downloads

PDF (1.8Mb PDF)  
eBook (725Kb EPUB)

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Brief history of our burial law  
New Zealand's current

# Chapter 8

## Cremation: sector overview and policy issues

### Overview of the sector

The cremation process  
Other methods of disposition  
The mix of public and private providers  
Industry trends

### The cremation process

- 8.10 The body, generally in a casket, is placed in the crematory furnace and exposed to extreme heat.<sup>289</sup> During cremation, the soft tissue and most of the skeleton is reduced to ash. Some small bone fragments, known as cremains, also remain. Magnets are passed over the remains to attract any fragments of metal from artificial limbs or joints or from the casket used in the cremation.<sup>290</sup>
- 8.11 It is common practice in New Zealand to then grind the remains in a cremulator to give the uniform, sand-like consistency of the ashes, which can then be given to family members in an urn or other container. Some cultures, however, prefer that the cremains be left undisturbed, as the bone fragments are considered to have particular significance.

### Other methods of disposition

- 8.12 Around the globe, concerns about emissions and the high amount of energy required to cremate a body have led to the development of a number of experimental technologies for disposal of the body. One example is resomation, which uses alkaline hydrolysis to liquefy the body.<sup>291</sup> Although not yet introduced in this country, some local authority crematoria are monitoring this and other new technologies. It seems likely that in future decades, alternative technologies for the disposition of human remains could well be introduced. While the focus of this chapter is on the regulatory environment surrounding cremation, the principles and policy issues under consideration would almost certainly be applicable to any new disposition techniques for the treatment of remains adopted in New Zealand.

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## THE NZ CEMETERIES & CREMATORIA CONFERENCE HAS BEEN RESCHEDULED

Due to the increasing global risk of COVID 19, the New Zealand Cemeteries & Crematoria Collective and Recreation Aotearoa have made the decision to reschedule the 2020 Cemeteries and Crematoria Conference to May 2021.

CEMETERIES &  
CREMATORIA  
COLLECTIVE  
OF NEW ZEALAND



**FAQs**

# Private enterprise

- **Deborah Richards**

- **Water Cremation Aotearoa New Zealand**

- Deborah Richards is the founder of Water Cremation Aotearoa New Zealand, a group dedicated to bringing the option of resomation (water cremation) to New Zealand.
- Prior to August 2018 Deborah was a nurse and midwife for 28 years. After staying in accommodation next to a crematorium on a trip to Bali, Deborah started thinking about our death practices in Aotearoa. Following research, a trip to meet with Resomator founder, Sandy Sullivan, in Leeds, and a trip to see the machine in operation at UCLA (Los Angeles), Catherine made it her mission to bring this option/service to New Zealanders via Water Cremation Aotearoa NZ.
- This is currently being established in Christchurch.




<https://www.nzrecreation.org.nz/Site/conference/cemeteries-and-crematoria/speakers/deborah-richards.aspx>





Anglican  
Church  
Diocese  
(Auckland)



## Quarry on the outskirts of Christchurch NZ.

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- How to rehabilitate a 'dead' quarry?
- "We are looking to achieve a social license to develop a legacy for the quarry and for the community".

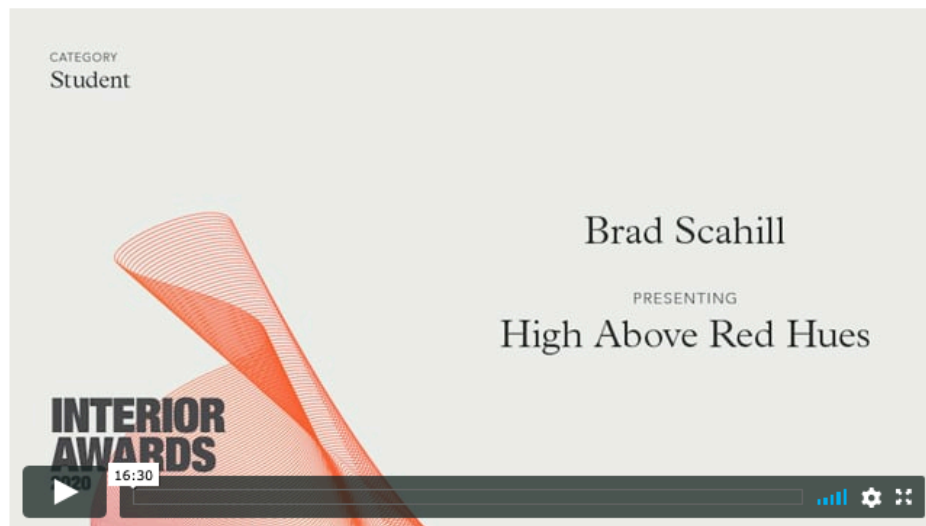


# ARCHITECTURENOW

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## Watch here: Interior Awards 2020 Student finalists

High Above Red Hues by Brad Scahill of the University of Auckland



Our relationship to death and the environment is addressed through a proposal for an 'Aquamation' facility on the Port Hills of Christchurch, New Zealand. Aquamation – a sensitive process in which bodies are converted into water – allows us to observe death and body disposition as an ecological activity that can rehabilitate native vegetation.

Sustained by a nutrient-rich effluent water created through the process of Aquamation, the flora of the Port Hills may be regenerated over time as an ecological monument reminiscent of the pre-human environment; a beautiful, poetic and natural means for the disposal of mortal remains.

The project suggests that architecture is important to facilitate emotional rituals around death and can be used as a catalyst to provoke cathartic, introspective contemplation. The proposal for an 'Aquatorium' introduces a new model for death-care infrastructure, informed by the life-death cycle of nature. It seeks to represent the importance of the individual to the whole whilst also questioning if we are prepared to adapt one of the most emotionally significant human moments to conserve the natural world.

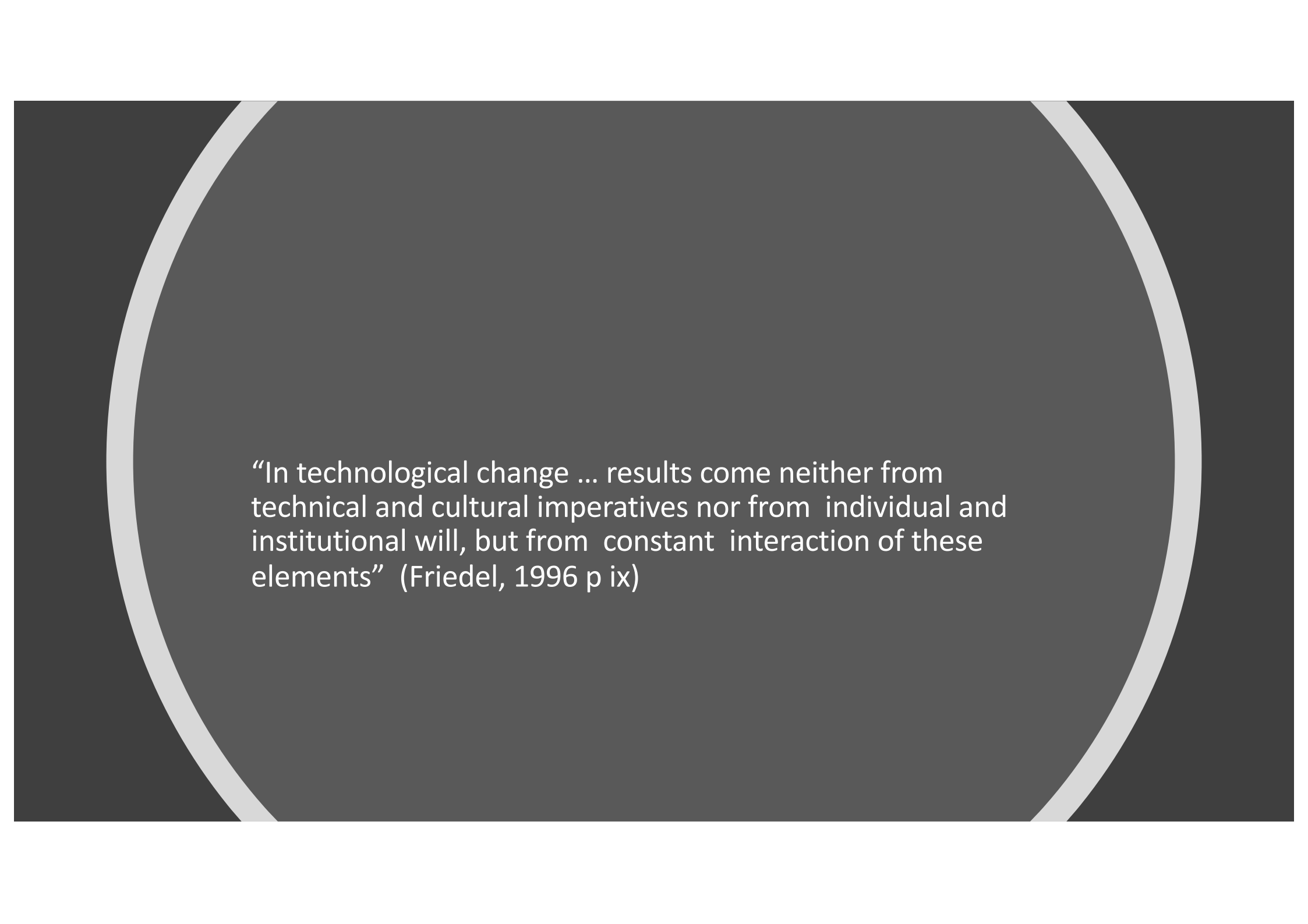
# Cultural syncretism

is when an aspect of two or more distinct **cultures** blend together to create a new custom, idea, practice, or philosophy.

Cultures of sustainability

Cultural sustainability





“In technological change ... results come neither from technical and cultural imperatives nor from individual and institutional will, but from constant interaction of these elements” (Friedel, 1996 p ix)